

MEDOC MOUNTAIN STATE PARK

PARK PROFILE

PARK PURPOSE STATEMENT

Local interest in having a state park located in Edgecombe, Halifax, Nash, Northampton and Wilson counties led the Division of Parks and Recreation to conduct an extensive survey to identify sites possessing qualities desirable for a state park. The survey identified one suitable area, Medoc Mountain/Fishing Creek, because of its unique mixture of natural, scenic and recreational resources, and its potential for interpretation and education.

The survey report—presented to the State Parks Committee of the Board of Conservation and Development in May 1972—recommended that (1) Medoc Mountain and 3,000 acres of surrounding land be acquired; (2) Fishing Creek be designated as a N.C. Natural and Scenic River; and (3) a park corridor be established from Medoc Mountain to Fishing Creek via Little Fishing Creek. The recommendations were supported locally and by the State Parks Committee. The Halifax Development Commission secured an option to purchase the standing timber on Medoc Mountain, thus preventing its harvest. State land acquisition for the park began in October 1973.

Medoc Mountain is a monadnock that rises 325 feet above sea level and 170 feet above the surrounding terrain, thus creating a steep topography unusual for the northeastern Piedmont. The mountain, which is actually a weather-and erosion-resistant ridge, is one of the easternmost formations of crystalline rock in the state. The Medoc Mountain area is particularly significant geologically because it contains one of the largest molybdenum deposits known in the southeastern United States. The metallic mineral molybdenum, valued as an alloy because of its high strength and low weight, occurs in some quartz veins and portions of granite as the mineral molybdenite. Pyrite, or “fool’s gold,” is often found with molybdenite.

The park’s significant scenic resources include exposed rock outcrops and steep bluffs rising up to 50 feet above Little Fishing Creek. The creek flows through a mixture of bottomland hardwoods, annuals and other herbaceous plants and wildflowers. An expansive view over the diverse forest types of the area is possible from the top of the mountain.

Medoc Mountain State Park offers various outdoor recreational opportunities compatible with the protection of the park’s natural resources. The park’s location, less than 10 miles from I-95, enhances regional access and makes it a convenient camping destination for long-distance travelers. Opportunities exist for groups and individuals to enjoy activities such as hiking, nature study, fishing, picnicking, canoeing and camping.

The park contains a diverse combination of forest types segregated according to the unusually steep topography of the fall line. The Medoc Mountain Natural Area encompasses xeric pine-hardwood and hardwood forests on the slopes, with flood plain and lowland hardwood communities along the creeks. The Beech Ravine Natural Area lies on the steep west-northwest facing slopes of Little Fishing Creek. Beech trees dominate the canopy except for a few scattered red oaks. The natural areas have good examples of the chestnut oak/mountain laurel and beech/mountain laurel communities. The Neuse River waterdog (Necturus lewisi), a special-concern amphibian endemic to North Carolina, lives in Little Fishing Creek.

Medoc Mountain State Park exists so that its valuable geological, scenic, recreational and biological resources can be protected. The Division of Parks and Recreation is charged with preserving those values and providing park experiences that promote pride in and understanding of North Carolina’s natural heritage.

PRIMARY INTERPRETIVE THEMES

Geology: One of the primary interpretive themes is the geology of Medoc Mountain, focusing on how the mountain was formed and its geologic composition. Emphasis is placed on the unusual rocks and minerals, such as molybdenum and pyrite.

Ecology of Little Fishing Creek: This theme focuses on Little Fishing Creek's biological diversity, aquatic habitats and water quality.

Park History: This theme focuses on the area's settlement, the winery and land-use history.

STATISTICS

Visitation (1999)	67,403
Operating Budget (FY 98-99)	\$ 216,072
Revenue (FY 98-99)	\$ 7,442

VISITOR FACILITIES

Tent & trailer camping (6 sites, showers, no hookups)	Improved group camping (3 sites)
Picnic area (32 tables, 1 shelter)	Drinking water
3 Hiking trails (9.5 miles total)	River fishing
Boat/canoe access	

CONSTRUCTION AND RENOVATION NEEDS

1	The maintenance area improvements project will construct a 6-bay vehicle storage building, 400 sq. ft. lumber storage building and 1800 sq. ft. warehouse.	\$ 454,749
2	The dam, lake, bathhouse, boathouse and barracks project (land dependent) will create an 18-acre lake, construct an access road and 180-car parking; extend electric, water and telephone lines; septic system; boathouse, bathhouse and dock; and add a barracks to the maintenance area.	2,623,595
3	The canoe launches project will construct a long access road and 2 canoe launches with access roads and parking.	218,279
4	The tent and trailer campground and group camp replacement project will construct 20 campsites with hookups, 30 standard sites, a 12 ft. wide road to the campsites, extension of septic field and water line, electrical hookups to camping loop, general repairs to the existing washhouse, a gate, a ranger residence, an 800 ft. gravel access road and parking, a Clevis Mulchrum toilet and 15 primitive campsites.	2,587,183
5	The picnic areas, access road, parking and bridge project will construct an 8000 ft. access road and bridge across Bear Swamp Creek, 120 picnic sites, 240-car parking, standard toilet building, 12-table shelter, water and electric line extension and septic systems.	3,229,439
6	The community building project includes the clearing of 3 acres, an 800 ft. road extension, 60-car parking, septic installation, water and electric extension, tables and chairs and construction of a 3000 sq. ft. community building.	497,326

7	The horse trail head and trails project (land dependent) will construct a 400 ft. access road to the trail head, provide a Clevis Multrum toilet, parking for 20 vehicles and 15 miles of new bridle trails with 4 hardened water crossings.	1,201,837
8	The main park road paving project (land dependent) will realign and pave 3 miles of the main park road.	292,339

TOTAL: \$ 11,104,747

REGISTERED NATURAL HERITAGE AREAS

Medoc Mountain Registered Natural Heritage Area: This area covers 185 acres and includes the mountain for which the park is named. Rising to an elevation of 322 feet, Medoc Mountain is a residual landform that has resulted from more rapid erosion of the surrounding landscape. Geologically, it is classified as a monadnock or inselberg. The mountain's topography is unusually steep for this region of the state and rock outcrops near the summit are some of the easternmost natural exposures of crystalline rock in the state. The area is also geologically significant due to the presence of large quantities of molybdenum ore. Significant natural communities include Piedmont Monadnock Forests on the mountain's northeast and south/southwest facing slopes. This represents the easternmost occurrence of this community type in the state. A well developed Piedmont/Low Mountain Alluvial Forest occurs at the base of Medoc Mountain and Piedmont/Mountain Levee Forest, Piedmont/Mountain Bottomland Forest and Piedmont/Coastal Plain Heath Bluff communities occur along Little Fishing Creek.

Little Fishing Creek Bluffs Registered Natural Heritage Area: This area covers 20 acres and occurs on the steep northwest to northeast facing slopes above Little Fishing Creek in the park's southwestern corner. The bluffs in this area rise abruptly from the stream and are good examples of a Mesic Mixed Hardwood Forest community. Slopes exceed 70 percent in some areas and mature beech trees dominate the forest, with some individuals exceeding 19 inches in diameter. The flood plain adjacent to the bluffs supports a number of extremely large trees, including loblolly pine (51 inches diameter at breast height), sweetgum (35 inches dbh) and willow oak (Q. phellos) (37 inches dbh).

FUTURE LAND ACQUISITION NEEDS

Completing the master plan for Medoc Mountain State Park calls for the acquisition of 968 acres to provide suitable land for planned facilities, to improve access control within the park, to protect the park lake's watershed and to buffer the newly planned main park entrance.

Master Plan Total Acreage	3,348 acres
Current park acreage	<u>2,380 acres</u>
Acquisition Needs	968 acres

1999 STAFF POSITIONS

Permanent		Seasonal		Peak Load	
Park Superintendent I	1	Park Attendant	3	Park Attendant	1
Park Ranger II	2	General Utility Worker	1	Office Assistant II	1
Maintenance Mechanic III	1	Office Assistant II	1		
General Utility Worker	1				
Office Assistant III	1				

PROPOSED STAFF ADDITIONS

Permanent		Seasonal		Peak Load	